

NEW HAMPSHIRE HIGHWAY HISTORY

In the two-year period before New Hampshire's first biennial highway report was published for 1905-06, the state engineer, John W. Storrs, traveled 20,329 miles--18,190 by rail, 2,016 by team and 123 on foot--to supervise the repair of 331 miles of highways.

The first biennial highway report listed an annual appropriation of \$125,000, identified 23 state roads totaling 135 miles, and established a formula for improving main highways with joint state-town funds.

By 1910 automobile revenue amounted to \$42,421.50 and motor truck traffic was a "menace" to existing roads, bridges and culverts.

In 1915, Frederic E. Everett was appointed the first Commissioner and the first Federal Road Act apportionment was \$20,996.62 in 1916 and \$41,993.24 in 1917. A Traffic census in 1918 followed by another in 1922, when compared on a daily basis, showed that a 250 percent increase was attained in the four year period. Seven percent of total travel of it was house-drawn, 93 percent was motor driven and 59 percent was local and 41 percent out-of-state.

A one cent gasoline tax was imposed in 1923 and raised to 2 cents in 1924.

In the Winter of 1925-26, snow was removed from 620 miles of highways at an average cost of \$60 per mile. The next year was snow plowed and a total of 2,500 miles of major highways opened to winter travel.

With the Bureau of Public Roads a transportation survey was conducted in 1926 (copy available). The gasoline tax was raised to 3 cents in 1927 and to 4 cents in 1928.

A record flood in 1927 cost \$2.5 million in repairs. By 1930 the truck line system of 1517 miles was 100 percent complete.

By 1933, the Department assumed full control of reconstruction and maintenance of all trunk lines and bridges and constructed portions of state aid highway excluding bridges. In 1935, financing of state aid projects was assured by the State, and Town Road Aid (TRA) for local roads was authorized, the town sharing 25 percent.

Floods, in 1936, damaged highways and bridges at a cost of 4 million.

In 1937, the states secondary system was designated and \$125,000 apportioned toward improvement. The famed "Blue Angels" started their winter night patrol in 1938 and another flood and hurricane destroyed or severely damaged highways and bridges.

By 1941, World War II has its effect. Engineers left for military service, shortages occurred in steel, substitute materials were used. The laboratory tested for the Army and the Navy. The Sign Division marked pavements in the Atlantic coast dim-out areas, defence access roads to mica mines and timberlands were built with Federal funds, and all other new road construction came to a halt by 1942. There was an average highway construction loss of 52 miles a year in a 4 year period.

For winter maintenance, direct application of salt to pavement started in 1941, changed from bag to bulk salt in 1952.

Bids were again opened in 1946 for 11 projects totaling 27 miles, 31 miles were sealed with asphalt and pea-stone, 887 miles were center-lined with yellow, and the first project with air entrained concrete was the Hampton Sea Wall.

In 1947, a \$7.5 million bond issue was authorized to construct, operate and maintain the states first modern toll road-15 miles along the coast. General Frank D. Merrill succeeded Mr. F.E. Everett as Commissioner in 1949. The next year, the New Hampshire turnpike was opened and the Highway Department became the Department of Public Works and Highways in 1951. The gas tax was raised to 5 cents.

Floods caused serious damage again in 1953, and a 25-mile extension (Spaulding) of the NH Turnpike and a new 40-mile central turnpike were authorized.

In 1955 Commissioner Merrill died following his election as President of AASHTO. He was succeeded by J.O. Morton, and that same year half the Central Turnpike was opened. The Spaulding and the rest of the Central were completed in 1957.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 opened the current era of accelerated road building and launched the Interstate Highway System. The State Gas tax was raised to 6 cents in 1957 and to 7 cents in 1959.

In 1963, the Department moved into the J.O. Morton Building on Hazen Drive. Consolidating except for the Traffic Division, Laboratory and State Garage Operations.

In 1968, Commissioner Robert W. Whitaker succeeded Commissioner J.O. Morton.

In 1976, Commissioner John Clements succeeded Commissioner Robert Whitaker

In 1978, The Blue Star Turnpike from the Mass-NH State line to Portsmouth was widened to eight lanes.

In 1979, the State gas tax was increased to 11 cents per gallon.

In 1981, the State gas tax was increased to 14 cents per gallon.

In 1981, a Transportation Division was assigned to the Department of Public Works and Highways. The Division brought to the department the responsibilities of Railroads and Mass Transit.

In 1985, State Legislature enacted Chapter 402 establishing a Department of Transportation. This legislation placed the former Aeronautic commission, the urban Mass Transportation Office of State Planning and Transportation Division of the Public Utilities Commission under the Department.

In 1985 Commissioner John P. Chandler succeeded John Clements.

In 1985 the Governor named an Advisory Committee of the five Councilors and the Commissioner to develop future needs of N.H. State Highway System.

In 1985 Commissioner Wallace A. Stickney succeeded Commissioner John P. Chandler and became the first Commissioner of the New New Hampshire Department of Transportation in February of 1986.

In 1990 Commissioner Charles P. O'Leary succeeded Commissioner Wallace A. Stickney as the CEO of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

In 1990 the gas tax was raised to 16 cents per gallon.

In 1991 the state gas tax was increased to 18 cents per gallon. From an appropriation of \$374,000 just seventy-seven years in 1914 the Department currently operates on a 210 million annual budget, and along with the magnitude of construction has come multiplications of problems, controls, confusion, inspections, investigations and delays.

Since 1956, highway expansion has concentrated on modernizing a master network of primary, secondary and Urban that complement the Interstate System and New Hampshire Toll Expressways. This arterial network, maintained year around, has been a major contributing factor to the State's extraordinary industrial and recreational growth.